Lifting Ban on Non-Iodised Salt

680. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item "Experts concerned over lifting of ban on non-iodised salt", appearing in the Asian Age dated 17th June, 2000;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto;

(c) whether it is a fact that, as mentioned in the news-item, the Prime Minister has agreed to lift ban on the sale of non-iodised salt in the country; and

(d) the reasons for disregarding the viewpoints of prominent scientific experts and health specialists all of whom have advised against the ban being lifted?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE [DR. (SHRIMATI) RITA VERM A): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) There is no ban on manufacture of non-iodised salt except the restriction on sale for direct human consumption. The notification issued on 10.5.2000 seeks public comments on a proposal to withdraw this restriction so that both iodised and non-iodised salt can be made available and the public can make an 'informed choice*.

(c) and (d) No decision has yet been taken on the notification. Comments supporting and opposing the draft rules have been received from the public, including prominent scientific experts. All opinions received in the matter will be carefully considered before a final decision is taken.

Withdrawal of Iodisatlon of Salt

681. SHRI K.C. KONDAIAH: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) when iodisation of salt was made compulsory;

(b) whether it is a fact that Government have issued a preliminary notification proposing withdrawal of compulsory iodisation of edible salt;

(c) if so, the reasons for the proposed withdrawal;

(d) whether it has come to the notice of Government that higher incidence of iodine deficiency disorders has been reported in many parts of the country, including Karnataka; and

(e) whether Government would taken steps to drop the proposed withdrawal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE [DR. (SHRIMATI) RITA VERMA]: (a) Sale of iodised salt for human consumption was made compulsory as per amendment made in PFA Rules, 1955 *w.e.f.* 27.5.1998.

(b) Yes, Sir. A notification publishing draft rules proposing removal of the restriction on sale of common salt for direct human consumption and inviting public comments was issued on 10.5.2000.

(c) The decision to issue this notification was taken in the wake of sustained representations received from various sections of public, to the effect that the maters of public health should be left t the 'informed' choice of consumer and not enforced through compulsion.

(d) As per surveys conducted in 282 districts in 25 States and 5 UTs including Karnataka, 241 districts have been found to be endemic for IDD *i.e.* where the prevalence is more than 10.0%.

(e) Representations have been received from the putyic both supporting and opposing the proposed withdrawal of compulsory iodisation of salt for direct human consumption. All these representations will be carefully examined before a final decision is taken on whether to follow a strategy of compulsion or of voluntary acceptance of the use of iodised salt to combat iodine deficiency disorders.